41, Victoria Road,
Kilburn, London,
England, Aug 2, 1872

My dear ~~Doctor~~ Dr. Holmes,

I do not know whether you will recollect the stranger who had the joy of seeing you — you being certainly no stranger to him — now nearly ~~twelve~~ twelve years ago? What I do know is, that I have no right to trouble after so long an interval of blank; but also I know that you are about the last man now living on this earth to cavil at any question of "right", or to quarrel with one of your affectionate ~~readers, however~~ ~~worthless he might be~~ readers, however little worth he may have ~~to boast~~ to boast in his own deeds. ~~His~~ My writing indeed is but a part of the ~~evidence~~ influence which you exercise in both halves of the world; for it is what I may call the beauty-force ~~Beauty~~ of your writings that makes

now draws me into your presence.
I want to make a suggestion to you. Not
that I would clun you for a new book;
though there would be great temptation to
do so, if the process were likely to succeed.
What I really am really anxious to do
is, just to make sure that the idea which
has crossed me shall actually present
itself to your own mind, for ~~said mind
to do what it likes~~ you to do what you
like with it.

In the prelude ~~which the politicial~~
to the Presidential election which ~~your~~
the political orchestra of your country-
men is now performing, I seem to
hear certain familiar strains in
fuller & louder tones than ever. All
sorts of things are said about the
corruption of the officials; about the
consequent ~~public~~ indignation of the

public, the "capital" that the opposition can make out of the abuse, the altered relations of parties, & the novel demands which such changes have created in the political market, with ~~an a comm~~ splendid openings for the ~~trading~~ "politician." It was long ago explained to me that ~~the America~~ that last word, ~~politician bears quite a different signification in America quite different~~ to me, that that last word has a meaning in America quite different from its English signification. Pardon by the way, if I do not suspect me of anything Anti-American in my thought. To discount any mistrust that you may feel, let me confess, at once, that I am a bigoted devotee to Constitutional Monarchy; which appears to me - Anglice teste - to secure greater freedom for everybody, & a more absolute liberty for the discussion of every conceivable opinion, even in a practical spirit, than any other

form of political organization. But just now I am not thinking of any comparative criticism; my thoughts are entirely within the ~~range of~~ bounds of the Great Republic, intent solely on the action of that people & on the social influences at work for good or for ill. ~~I have been led to the~~ ~~state~~ And if I could approach you with ~~an~~ a thought ~~unworthy of your~~ ~~courtesy or~~ in my mind that ~~could~~ might offend you I should indeed hold myself disgraced. I have been led to the subject solely by the comments of American journals, & conversation with American friends, & I may say, the reading of your books.

It has been explained to me ~~as~~ — that the same sort of thing in New York & Philadelphia, & in Washington itself, — that much of the "low" state of feeling & motive among the active part of the people ~~arises from the total~~ —

is, in no small degree traceable to the total abstinence of the Upper Ten from public affairs; I can well understand it. Social pathologists are too apt to look only to the direct I contemplated results of any given forces, influence included, forgetting the far larger effects produced by indirect or secondary action. In education, for instance, the pupil not only learns what is specifically taught him, but also acquires more developed faculties, a higher state of mind, the chance of being with educated society, different habits of body as well as mind — how the eye & the hand are trained by the intellect! — new surroundings, in short a totally different life. [All said, most assuredly, not to enlighten you, but simply to show specifically what I mean. I am volunteering myself under cross-examination.] Thus the absence of the Upper Ten may have

the effect of withdrawing a most pregnant element from the political life of the Republic; & the class which is intent on indulging its own love of ease or its dislike to "vulgarity" & "corruption" causes an injury to the Commonwealth of which it has no conception. Again, various circumstances tend to make the really earnest & able politicians of the Union too narrow in their views - too empirically opposed to what is chivalrous, noble, & refined, as being aristocratic, anti-republican, & "effeminate." Now the very first step towards any reform is to disclose the facts of the case, to study the symptoms, & to ascertain the true relation of the morbid elements to the laws of nature.

And here I at last come to the point. With the aggravated complaints

about the present agitation in my ears, ~~all these reflections~~ & all the challenge to reflection, I was struck found myself thinking, what a glorious service ~~might~~ could be done to the healthy growth of the Republic if Oliver Wendell Holmes would but take up the case. I was ~~struck~~ struck with the effect that must be produced if you would do for political life & what you have for social life in Elsie Venner & the Guardian Angel. I long to see the involuntary, poisoned, ~~& conduct~~ & wrong-going conduct of the Politician explained & set forth for charitable care & kind correction in exactly the same searching, lucid, generous spirit as that which has ~~told me all the world how to understand & treat~~ made it clear even to that dull but supreme ruler, Everybody, how to treat the Elsie

Viewers of this world. ~~Also~~ I
I converse — not only to complete
the ~~work~~ moral, but also to make
known a truism which few have ever
suspected, — the actual existence I true
nature of the ~~Ro~~ true Patriot might
be disclosed. Your Elsie Venner embodies
one of the profoundest of truths, ~~set~~ I how
have so set it forth as to make that truth
as familiar as if it were a new commandment
— for it is the very corollary of the most
divine Christianity. And as a work of art it
is lovely. Not less lovely, even more
charmingly sweet is the truth embodied in the
Guardian Angel. I well know that it is
rare indeed to find the man, whatever his
class, whatever his culture, who is aware
that such beings exist on earth. Nay, few
can be brought to believe. They say that
such creatures are a fiction, the dream
of poetry, I all that sort of thing.

And one obvious result of the nearly ~~almost~~ universal incredulity is, that those very creatures who might grow to be guardian angels are stunted by living ~~them~~ in an atmosphere of despondent submission to lower influence. Your book has done more than any conceivable amount of ~~plain~~ argument or preaching, whether in book or pulpit, to clear away that morbid atmosphere & ~~so~~ cure the morbid doubtfulness.

see back

Do you remember that you gave me copies of your books when I was in Boston. I cannot tell you how I prize them — more & more, the ~~older~~ ~~I~~ more I read & learn.

Ever, my dear Dr. Holmes,
most faithfully yours
Thornton Hunt

I need scarcely say how utterly
alien to my thought is any thing like a stroke
of party fiction ~~fiction~~ in a party sense ~~or even in the political~~
satire bearing upon current events, or even
a political ~~satire~~ satire. I mean just
what I have said, & no more — an analytical
setting forth of life, in its ~~natural~~ political &
~~natural~~ aspect; ~~exposing~~ showing us the
causes of wrong-doing & the elevating ~~glorious~~ effects
of natural & healthy ~~nature~~ allowed its natural
~~play~~ play in action. But you will catch my
meaning even from my imperfect ~~sketch of it~~
attempt to express it.